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# THE WORLD CRISIS AND MISSIONARY WORK

EDWARD CALDWELL MOORE, D.D.

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*The World Crisis and Missionary Work*

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# *The World Crisis and Missionary Work*

By

Edward Caldwell Moore, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN BOARD

*An Address at the 106th Annual Meeting of the Board*
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The American Board of Commissioners
for Foreign Missions

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# THE WORLD CRISIS AND MISSIONARY WORK

WE are met at a time of unparalleled significance in the history of the American Board. In any ordinary year the changes in our constitution would have afforded us a topic of interested discussion. By that change representatives chosen by our churches for responsibility in all of our denominational interests are brought into the corporate membership of the Board. This year as our anxious minds press forward we give but a passing word to this most important event in our inner history. That word is one of profoundest gratitude that in the providence of God in this crisis of our work we can rest back upon the counsel and sympathy and support of our whole church. If ever those called upon to administer this work had need of such sympathy in their responsibility it is today.

In the ordinary course of things it would be only fitting that, called to take the place as best I may of our tried and beloved leader Dr. Capen, I should say something of the aims and results of his administration. I should make acknowledgment of the debt

which the Board and the whole cause of missions owes to him. Even as it is we can hardly let the hour pass without tribute of affection, without expression of regret that in this time of need we are deprived of his counsel. Perhaps we ought to rejoice that he has been spared the distress which these days bring us. The one thing which stands out in our recollection of him is that he would not have asked to be spared. Equally certain is that in this hour he would say, Do not stop to speak of me.

On my own part, in my first utterance from this chair and responding to the honor you saw fit to confer upon me last year at Detroit, I have but the briefest word of grateful appreciation to express. It is an honored succession to which you have called me. Here however, even more than in the connections just alluded to, words are unfitting. I shall feel the honor more keenly in the days of peace which, please God, may soon come. Just now that which I feel is the overwhelming responsibility. It is solicitude concerning decisions which we must make, anxiety that we may not fail in things in which we still can help and sorrow over a tragedy great beyond all our helping.

To none of us does the news from Turkey bring greater grief than to the Foreign Secretary. That

was the field of his own happy missionary years. Yet the Secretary's survey brings before us facts which in our own distress we might almost tend to forget. In some fields, notably in China, our work has been attended with almost unexampled success. A few years ago we were saying that China was the great problem. It is a great problem still but how marvellously is that problem being solved. In an ordinary year the success of our work in China alone would have been sufficient to fill all our sessions with the note of congratulation of the missionaries and of heartfelt praise of God. When I say this I am reminded that fifteen years ago last summer we went through a four months' agony of suspense about a large part of our staff in China. When we met in St. Louis in October it was to mourn the martyrdom of some of our missionaries and of scores of thousands of Chinese converts. It seemed as if all our work had been destroyed in the fury of the Boxer uprising. I am aware that the present catastrophe in Asiatic Turkey is almost immeasurably greater than that other. It is also more discouraging because it is far less excusable. I am merely saying that it is not in the least inconceivable that fifteen years hence we may be saying, in light of the wonder of God's dealing with the Ottoman Em-

pire; What hath God wrought. I cannot believe that all that our missions have done in Turkey in a hundred years is to be wiped out.

Both as to these victories in China and in India and elsewhere, and as well as to the disaster which has befallen us in Turkey, we shall be told by missionaries from the fields themselves. Those who come from the countries which are still being devastated by this cruel catastrophe will indeed be able to utter but a tithe of all that they have passed through. They themselves have suffered. They have seen colleagues and members of their own families suffer and die. They have witnessed the wanton torment and the death of hundreds and thousands of those for whose sake they have given the labor of their lives. These things cannot be told. We could not grasp them if they were told. The horrors of this year of slaughter and ruin outgo all our powers to comprehend. These true witnesses receive our reverent sympathy. They impress upon us anew the need that we do everything within our power to alleviate a misery the like of which the world has hardly seen. They foster in us the resolve that so far as in us lies, by God's help, the conditions which make such issues possible shall be done away.

What however is the particular message of the hour to us? What is the specific lesson which the missionary situation and the world situation as a whole enforces here for us? Can we gather this in a word and compress it into the few moments out of these busy sessions which I am entitled to occupy? In one sense the situation in all of our mission fields is, as never before, the reflection of the situation in Christendom. The condition in the central Moslem lands has been brought on directly by the ferocious strife in Christian Europe. The failures and mistakes and sins of Christendom are being visited upon the lands which we used to call heathen lands. Even we in America do not stand wholly on one side. We are part and parcel of the civilization which in so many important particulars has completely broken down. We may be brought at any moment into a position in which our action or again our failure to act may have incalculable consequences not merely for Europe but for every portion of the Orient as well. How important that, if possible, something of the spiritual significance of the crisis should be brought home to our consciences.

We stand at the end of the fifteenth month of the most disastrous of all wars. All of the nations in Europe which we have deeply loved and to each of

which we owe incomparable debt are involved in the terrific struggle. Some of them have been deluged with blood and laid waste by fire. They have lost millions of the flower of their youth. They have plunged countless women and children into life-long sorrow. They have piled up debts which it will take decades to pay. Our own country has been drawn forever from the position remote from the conflicts of the old world which it has thus far occupied. Not only so, but Asia and Africa have been drawn into the fray. Japan has actually taken the side of her old enemy Russia. Indians are on the British firing line in France. The Ottoman Empire, joining with the Teutonic powers, is the scene of bitterest conflict. The Balkan states, not yet recovered from their own bloody feuds, are drawn into the antagonisms of the major powers which have created and maintained in the peninsula a wretched and unwarrantable state of things from which the Balkan peoples have never been able to set themselves free. Turkey is what it is in no small measure because of the jealousies of the Christian powers.

After all, it is logical that the Orient should be thus involved. There is scarcely a smallest portion of Asia or Africa which has not come during the nine-

teenth century into closest contact with Europe. Some portions of these continents are actual fragments of Empires ruled from European capitals. All are the scenes of European commercial rivalries. Some lands, like Japan, over which no European flag ever floated, yet exemplify in amazing fashion the transforming effect of European ideas and institutions. Some in India are clamoring for autonomy, others seek the admission of India to the imperial parliament of Great Britain. All the peoples of the East have marvellously changed their attitudes toward characteristic elements of western civilization. They desire that which they long resisted. This is not always because they love western civilization any better than they did before. It is sometimes because this is the only way in which they think they can protect themselves against the violence of western men.

Again the western powers themselves, instead of desiring as for centuries they had done, merely to conquer in arms or merely to exploit in trade, have often in recent years sincerely endeavored to share with eastern peoples every highest element of their own civilization. In a genuine sentiment of humanity they have desired to confer the best that they had upon all the men whom they could reach. Not merely

have eastern armies and navies been created after western models but trade has been transformed, education modified, social systems revolutionized, ethical maxims altered, civil institutions reorganized. The world was being moulded into a unity. The war will mould it yet the more. Europe could not suffer the calamity which it has suffered without involving the whole world besides. The East will never again be that which it was before the war.

Nor in this assemblage do I need to say that it is not merely in respect of outward benefits that the West has sought to give of its best. For more than a century almost the whole of Christendom, Protestant and Catholic alike, has been endeavoring to give also of its most sacred moral principles and of its religious faith. It has aspired to change not merely the outward but also the inner life of men. I might put it more strongly still. Those who have felt most deeply as to this religious propaganda have sometimes not striven greatly, perhaps not always so greatly as they should, to change the outward life and lot of men. They set the inner life above everything. They sought to touch the hearts of men by the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, sure that all the rest would follow of itself. This moral and spiritual impulse of

the West was also at the first resented and rejected in the East. More recently it has been appreciated and measurably accepted. Indigenous institutions also are arising in many lands upon the basis of a faith which not long ago was looked upon as the faith of aliens and adhesion to it counted as treason to the most sacred of inheritances. It seemed as if we were on the eve of a yet larger acceptance of our faith and more extended influence of missions than ever before.

Sometimes now we are tempted to feel that in one at least of our fields all this fair prospect has been ruined and that the war has brought all our hopes to naught. In all of its fields our work is bound sooner or latter to feel the check. In the home lands minds are troubled and bewildered. Men hostile to missions find the ground of their hostility confirmed. We ourselves are sometimes constrained to ask if there can be any recovery of the prestige of a Christendom which in its own strife has fallen so low and, in its relation to the eastern nations, has had so much to do with bringing upon them this calmity or, at all events, shown itself powerless to prevent that calamity.

I desire however to inquire whether this is really so. Is it not rather true that the war brings into stronger relief than ever the specific things which missions

have tried to do. I desire to ask whether the war does not demonstrate more clearly than ever how necessary it is for the welfare of humanity that these specific things should be done. Is it not true rather that, abroad as well as at home, at home as truly as abroad, there has been far too little emphasis upon the moral and the spiritual, far too little urgency in the propaganda for the Christian faith. We have relied upon arms. We have trusted to wealth. We have boasted of science. All of these grounds of confidence have proved unavailing or rather, some have drawn after them the very conflict they were supposed to obviate. There is no secret of recovery from the present dreadful state in which we find ourselves and no assurance whatsoever against the recurrence of such a catastrophe, save in return both at home and abroad to a profounder moral life, to a more vital religious conviction. Is there not therefore in all that which has happened only a new incitement to our work? Is there not in it a new fortifying of our conviction and a new encouragement of our devotion? If thus we and all of Christendom shall be brought to see the moral values more nearly in their true light and to return to our endeavor with new consecration, it may some day seem that those who have suffered and died to bring home to the world this lesson have not died in vain.

In our own world here at home the century just past was one of marvellous progress in the mastery of nature and of all that makes for power and comfort in the outward life of men. It was a century of vast increase in certain areas of our knowledge. It would be unjust not to recognize that the century was marked also by a deepening of the sentiment of humanity, by works of charity and philanthropy on an unprecedented scale and by generous efforts at the alleviation of every form of human misery. The prevailing direction of much of religious development in recent years has been that of the application of the spirit of Christianity to social and economic problems, to the righting of old wrongs, to the bringing in, as men fondly hoped, of the Kingdom of God here upon earth. There has been widespread intolerance, both within Christian circles and without those circles, of that which would have passed even fifty years ago as a typical manifestation of spiritual religion.

Now God forbid that I should waste time here tonight trying to revive the ideal of a bygone age, or that I should use devout words of familiar sound without the effort to attach clear meaning to them. I suppose that other-worldliness in the sense in which it was once real to passionately earnest Christians is

gone from us forever. In the sense of a neglect of the problem of man's life in this world, we do not wish to be other-worldly. Nothing could be further from my wish than to belittle those efforts which have been made, many of them by people of no sympathy with religion as they understand it, to confer the gifts of civilization upon the needy, both in this land and in all the lands, to the very ends of the earth. Nothing could be further from my purpose than to criticise the efforts of the church and missions to add to their work on behalf of the gospel work, on behalf also of every other form of human good, to deal with every form of evil, to confer the gifts of civilization also and thus realize the broadest meaning of the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ as we now with our whole hearts conceive it.

Yet I suppose that we all have in the face of the war a bewildering, an overwhelming sense that our boasted civilization has broken down. We are crushed under the sense that certain elements of that civilization in which some had put all their reliance and in which we all had put large confidence have proved utterly inadequate. Considerations which once seemed to men self-evident now seem so mocking that we wonder that anybody was ever found foolish enough to believe them.

The unlimited development of military and naval power to which the European nations trusted and taught the only Asiatic nation which had a free hand, namely Japan, in very fear of Europe to do the same, the notion that peace could be secured by amassing armaments seems now one of the most absurd of human delusions. The mind bent upon measuring everything in terms of force was bound some day to appeal to force. That we in America have not lived thus for a generation in one of these armed camps was due in part to the mere accident of our geographical isolation. Incidental to that isolation there was a very widespread and naïve ignorance among us Americans as to what was going on in the rest of the world. That isolation is diminished and that ignorance and indifference in part at least removed. Now we are between two alternatives. Shall we in sentimentality and bombast remain unarmed and so court the assault of any brutality and unscrupulousness which may be abroad in the world? Or shall we arm and enter upon the road which, pursued long enough, has led all the other nations to the frightful disaster to which they have now come? Or shall we have character enough to possess necessary arms but to use them only for the good?

The industries, the accumulation of wealth, the dependence of nations one upon another in their commerce, the inconceivable cost of such a war as we behold, these were relied upon to prevent the war. Herbert Spencer was confident that an industrial age would put an end to militarism. We all used this argument. The nations might bluster. The bankers would at the last moment see to it that there was no war. The war would cost too much. Surely it has proved costly enough, but not costly enough to prevent it nor even now to put an end to it. In some sense it was trade, the question of money and markets which made the war.

We were confident of our science. We were saying that it would make war so frightfully destructive of human life that men would shrink from such conflict. Destructive of human life science has made the war, but men have not shrunk from it. We said comfort had so softened men that they would not choose the path of such inconceivable suffering. Softened creatures of ease and luxury we had thought sufficiently numerous among us before the war. Some even of these have done heroic things in the war. We said that all the humane impulses of modern times would bring it about that men never could inflict suffering upon

other men as they used to do. Has that proved true?

We had developed a certain kind of internationalism. There were few movements of modern times which until a year ago were not striving to be international movements. And, as if in a single moment, that all vanished and we were delivered over to a nationalism so insistent, so unscrupulous, to racial animosities which have by this time become so brutal that we may fairly say that the world has seen nothing like them since the invasions of the barbarians.

Need I make further illustrations of my contention? Some factors to which we trusted are shown to be absolutely false and subversive of civilization itself. Some others have been revealed as at least pitifully inadequate save as combined with other elements which they show of themselves no faculty to produce. We have not been wrong in our belief in this world as the subject of redemption. If the war proves anything it is the world-need of redemption. We have been wrong however in our estimate of the relative significance of the forces by which that redemption is to be brought about. I say we, because our own nation and even many in our churches have shared too much the general position of our modern civilization. We have trusted too much to the forces of the world

itself to bring about the redemption. Or, to put it differently and with more truth to the attitude of really Christian men, we have been so intent upon the applications of our power to every problem in the outer life of men, that we have tended always to forget the source and the conditions of the maintenance of that power. We have tended perpetually to lose the sense that the forces for the evolution and the reconstruction of the outward life of men are the forces of the inner life. They are the forces of the soul. There will be no better world until there are good men to make it such. We tended to forget the fact that the eternal problem is the problem of goodness, whether of individuals or of states, of commercial circles, of industrial classes, of intellectual coteries. The eternal problem is the moral problem. It is the religious issue. The eternal fact is the fact which religion exists to keep ever before our minds. It is the truth which Christ calls to us across two thousand years, all the time that we are magnifying this or that aspect of our civilization, growing self-congratulatory over this or that achievement of our educating, our reforming and ameliorating zeal: What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. There is no root of civilization save in men whom God makes

good, and there is no worthy issue of civilization save as it makes better men.

Now the thing which the war seems to me to bring home to us is the thinness of the veneer of our civilization, the nearness of barbarism and of nameless atrocity underneath that veneer. The thing which impresses me and oppresses me is the sense that when certain outward combinations failed the whole collapsed. No one denies the virtues which the war brings out. No one underrates the generosity and helpfulness which it has stimulated. But we all have the feeling that for aught we can see it is going indefinitely until someone or all of the participants is exhausted. We all have the feeling that even then when it is over the negotations which follow will be almost as grave as the war itself, if things are not to lead to a resumption of the awful struggle at no distant date. We all have the feeling that, if the hatreds which are now so much in evidence shall then prevail, there is small hope of peace or welfare in the world. We all have the feeling that if one tittle of the valor and devotion to high ideals, of the generosity and self-sacrifice which are being expended on the war had been spent in the last decades in the conscientious effort to do away with the evils which brought on the war we would now be a

thousand years nearer the millenium than we are.

But what is the bearing of these reflections? Are they not a recurrence to the fundamental position of religion, a reminder to the church of its identical task, an urgency to us who are concerned with missions to take up again that work with renewed conviction and to carry it forward with a devotion made only greater by the calamity which has befallen us. Of all the aspects of the contacts of western nations with the oriental peoples, which have of late become so multifarious and have had such vast effect in the transformation of the East, the one which is least compromised in the present emergency is the cause of missions. The one which has done least harm and most good is missions. The one which has least to take back is the cause of missions. The one which has most reason to go forward in undoubting fashion is the cause of missions. The one which can have most confidence in its principles, so only that we are true to them, and most assurance of its results, is the cause of missions. The one which can contribute most to the recovery of the real prestige of Christendom is the cause of missions. In the light of all that is now transpiring we no longer cherish the old easy confidence that just to have been brought into closer contact

with our civilization, to have become participants in the common life of a world in which the current maxims of Christendom prevailed, was an unmixed benefit to other peoples. We have the bitter sense that whatever benefits there have been have been well mixed with evil, our own characteristic evils magnified and distorted as they appear in a new setting to which they do not belong. We have a contrite recognition of our own national and individual failures and mistakes and sins. There is abroad a revival among us of the sense for the moral magnitudes and of devotion to them at all costs. We see these as the only possible grounds of the reconstruction of our own western world. A recurrence to these same principles, an earnest emphasis upon these same truths, a leadership of the nations in these aspects of their life, is the only reparation we can offer for the evil we have done, as also it is the necessary supplement of the good which we may have done in this century of intense contacts of West and East. We cannot take from the men of the East the benefits we have conferred which now turn out to be such doubtful benefits. No, but we can pour ourselves out in zeal to be used of God in the conferring that first and last, that greatest and best of gifts without which the other gifts of civilization are of doubtful

benefit even here among ourselves. And is not this the identical business of missions? There is a sense therefore in which the continuance of missionary work, the enhancement of missionary work, the purification of its purposes, the concentration of its power, is the great need of the hour in the relations of West and East. The fulfilment of this task must fall more than ever to us Americans, because in the main we have stood outside of the animosities which so many of the other nations have inspired and because we are not crippled in men and money as for a long time the other nations must be crippled.

It is but a commonplace of missionary history that the times of the distress of the nations to whom we have ministered have been the times of the enlargement of our opportunities, of the throwing down of barriers, of the turning of the hearts of the peoples to us as they had never turned before. It is a commonplace in the experience of any minister that the time of distress in a given home in his congregation is the time when, if he is faithful, he gains a love and trust he never could have won in any other way. The worst periods of suffering in our mission fields have been the best times for the spiritual influence of our work. After such periods have come almost invariably our

great harvests. It is true that in fields whose very names haunt us in these days our regular church work, our organized school work is all suspended. No one can see when or how it is going to be resumed. In some places buildings, the fruit of the self-denial of Christians both here and there, have been destroyed. Not only so, but the staff of workers, men and women of the highest training and Christian character have been murdered. The people for whom they and our missionaries labored have been driven into exile or to death itself. In some places the race which seemed closest to us in affinity and for which in larger part we have worked, seems doomed to extinction. Yet it is not possible that the example of the courage and faithfulness of these men and women should be lost upon either friends or foes. The blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church. Nothing but the insane frenzies of the moment could have led even Turks to forget the lesson of all the past, that the way to spread Christianity is to try to crush it. It is quite natural that those who desire no freedom or enlightenment of those over whom they rule should not look with favor upon our work. But large parts of the Turkish people themselves are fully prepared to recognize the incalculable benefits which in the purest

of unselfishness and without any ulterior motive whatsoever, our missions have conferred upon their race. It is not possible that the effect of such an example of the meaning of Christianity as that offered by the missionary and Christian community at Van, as it sought to shelter and to feed and to heal the wretched of both parties in the conflict, it is not possible that the influence of such acts as those of Miss Willard and Miss Gage and Miss Graffam as they refused to leave their little companies of women and girls when these were being driven off to death or a worse fate, should fail. It is not possible that such a word as that of Dr. Raynolds, "Who knows but that these calamities of the Christians may open the hearts of the Ottomans?" should fail to be fulfilled. Such a spirit must conquer the world.

There has been perhaps no moment since the beginning of the world war when it would have been more difficult to utter any forecast as to what the issue of the conflict is to be. Nor is it part of our duty here to make such prediction, even were prediction possible. Still less is it our province even in the sight of monstrous wrongs to speak in bitterness: Vengeance is mine I will repay saith the Lord. There are certain things which have happened in this last fifteen months which

are so awful that to be connected with responsibility for them forever in the memory of the human race is punishment enough. The issues of the war must profoundly affect the influence which Christian principles are hereafter to exert, both in Europe and America and in the remotest portions of the mission field. Yet although all else is shrouded in an uncertainty which nothing but the march of time can dispel there is one issue which we can predict with complete confidence. "Though upon earth there be now distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth, though the powers of heaven be shaken and the stars fall from heaven," one thing is sure. The old order may be changing, giving place to new, for God fulfils himself in many ways. We may all be punished for our sins. Elements of the world order without which we cannot easily imagine its continuance may pass away. Other elements of revolting tyranny, brutality and perfidy may temporarily have sway. Earth's greatest empires may have their day and cease to be. Of God's Kingdom there will be no end. In God's sight a thousand years are as but a day. We have been too confident per-

haps that his Kingdom was drawing near. Words which we uttered but two years ago seem now like the speech of children, so profound is our disillusionment. Perhaps now we are in turn too much depressed. God's thoughts are not our thoughts—fortunately. Unaltered by our own weak faith, inseparably bound up with the progress of human events, and yet divinely certain when all things human are unsure, the Kingdom comes. The age-long prayer of Christians which the Master himself taught: "Thy kingdom come," will be fulfilled. That fulfilment will exceed the highest hopes which any of those who have thus prayed have dared to cherish. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever."

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